

commonweal

The
[Social] Gospel

according to

1. Richard Nixon
2. George McGovern

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By Charles H. Henderson, Jr.

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NEWS & VIEWS

'Hanging' at Harrisburg

The sentences handed down in Harrisburg to Father Philip Berrigan and Sister Elizabeth McAlister were about as rough as they could be considering their "crime": passing letters to one another through the Lewisburg prison walls. ("Vengeful" was the word used by Paul O'Dwyer, one of the defense attorneys.)

The four two-year terms meted out to Phil are to run concurrent with the terms socked him for the Baltimore and Catonsville draft-board raids. Since the latter sentences run into 1974, the Harrisburg sentences seemingly do not add more time to Phil's imprisonment. But in another sense they do, for if allowed to stand (appeal proceedings are already in process), they could vitiate chances of parole before Phil's "max" date.

Sister Elizabeth's sentence—a year-and-a-day in prison and three years' probation—is so cruel as to border on the inhumane. It is unprecedented in terms of the "crime," as well as the consideration that Sister Elizabeth is a "first offender." People convicted of burglary and manslaughter frequently get off much easier.

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark pleaded at the sentencing proceedings for leniency, noting that convictions for far more serious acts of smuggling through prison walls—narcotics and weapons, for instance—have brought only suspended sentences in the past.

An even stronger legal consideration was Clark's reminder to Judge R. Dixon Herman that the "crime" for which Father Berrigan and Sister Elizabeth were convicted is, because of changes in the law, no longer a crime at all. Prisoners may now

freely write to and receive letters from people outside prison.

Judge Dixon was unmoved by Ramsey Clark or by others offering testimony on behalf of the defendants, including character witnesses Father Matthew O'Rourke, superior general of the Josephite Fathers, of which Phil is a member, and Sister Brendan McQuillan of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Sister Elizabeth's order.

His stiff sentences rang out—and documented in the minds of many the hostility he was alleged to have harbored for the defendants throughout the trial.

Ramsey Clark's presentation, to return to that, was generally reported to be as eloquent as it was persuasive to all but Judge Herman.

Efforts to obtain a transcript of his remarks from the court reporter at Federal District Court in Harrisburg were not, however, immediately successful. Consultation between the court reporter and Judge Herman produced word that there were "a lot of other things to be gotten out" before the Clark transcript. It will not be available for "about a month."

In contrast to the sentences at Harrisburg, Federal Judge Samuel P. King gave probation and a \$500 fine to James Douglass and James Albertini for their raid on classified documents at Hickam Air Force Base's electronic warfare office in Hawaii.

Douglass, an author and assistant professor of religion at the University of Hawaii, and Albertini, a teacher at a Honolulu Catholic grade school, had poured their own blood over the documents, protesting that the electronic warfare directed from Hickam violates humanity as well as treaties signed by the U.S.

The government's case against the pair was virtually

neutralized when the Pentagon declined to reveal the contents of the classified documents on which the blood had been poured. The charges against Douglass and Albertini, accordingly, had to be reduced from felonies to misdemeanors. Still, the government gained convictions on counts of conspiracy and destruction of government property.

Douglass is now back in the classroom. Not Albertini. He was dismissed from his parochial school post following the incident.

Drafting of Monks

Thich Nhat Hanh, chief of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation to Paris, assesses South Vietnamese President Thieu's decision to draft into the military monks, novices, priests and seminarians:

"Sadly, it is probable that the new decree will also cause further deterioration in Catholic-Buddhist relations. Because Mr. Thieu and so many others important in the government are Catholic, and because the vast majority who will suffer under this decree are Buddhist, it is inevitable that many of the Buddhists will see this as a new Catholic effort to destroy the Buddhist religious inheritance. This is all the more likely as Catholics tend to enjoy a more privileged position, economically and politically, and will have a great likelihood of being unofficially exempted. It is predictable that the only Catholic clergy to suffer under the new ruling will be those who favor peace and the nonviolent solution of Vietnamese problems."

Pacific News Service reported that the Buddhist exemptions were ended, and the draft age lowered from 18 to 17, because of the heavy toll of ARVN casualties in recent fighting. Thus the monks become, in the agency's words, the latest "cannon fodder in a war that seems insatiable for it."

Where Is He Now Dept.?

Charles Sullivan, the Alabama priest who created a flap at the bishops' meeting a few years ago by conducting a sit-in, is now stirring things up in San Antonio.

A week behind bars for activities connected with a jail hunger-strike shocked Sullivan into becoming a candidate for sheriff on a jail-reform platform.

Sullivan's contention is that animals at the San Antonio zoo have a better life and far better medical and health-care program than inmates of Bexar County jail. (The jail budget last year provided only 39 cents per inmate for medical needs in the jail, according to Sullivan; the zoo has an \$83,000 hospital equipped with extensive X-ray equipment, surgical facilities, doctors, etc.)

Sullivan would reform prison life; upgrade prison medical facilities; democratize the jail; and depopulate it through a wide-use of personal recognizance bonds, probation and parole for all misdemeanor miscreants.

Sullivan, who has left the priesthood and married, is attracting considerable publicity, but his chances for election are not deemed strong. His is a write-in candidacy, and not since 1942 has a major political post in the San Antonio district gone to a write-in.

Sullivan operates a referral center in San Antonio for families of persons in jail and to assist persons to find jobs and places to stay when released from jail.

JOHN DEED



CORRESPONDENCE



God Blessed America

Hamilton, Ontario

To the Editors: As an American (presently studying "abroad"), I find myself dismayed and disturbed by Thomas McGowan's "American Theology" [June 30].

In the first place the article, read as a putative description of a dominant trend in American theological history, is inadequate and misleading. Put bluntly, it strikes me as a hodgepodge of distortions and simplifications. In McGowan's analysis the *entire* tradition of "European Christian thought" is caricatured as one continuous legalistic preoccupation with sin which ignored the doctrine of creation. One wonders what happened to Aquinas or what the Reformation disputes were about? In contrast to this straw man, "American theology" centers on the theme of creation which "subsumes the theme of redemption." Thus "American theology" is optimistic since "this is the Age of the Spirit and the Kingdom is in fact already here." The chauvinist contrast of America and Europe (clear-cut "good guys" and "bad guys" in the best American fashion!) leads to an, in effect, exclusive polarization of creation and redemption. Perhaps because of this, McGowan's presentation indulges in a continuous sleight of hand which resolves the difficult question of the relationship between *God's* creative-redemptive work and *man's* free activity by rendering the two indistinguishable. *God's* Kingdom is already here. Thus, since "the slogan 'We shall overcome!' is uniquely American," "all that is required is for man [sic] to remove the sins which cover over . . . the reality." Surely the creationist theologians McGowan purports to describe, insofar as they were *theologians*, were not so careless in their efforts to re-think the relations of nature and grace, God and man.

Perhaps even more disturbing than
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A RELIGIOUS TEST?

As Charles P. Henderson, Jr. notes in his Nixon-McGovern article elsewhere in this issue, both Presidential candidates this time are Protestants, which means that there is no "religious issue" in the way there was when John F. Kennedy ran. Certainly Mr. Nixon's Quakerism seems of such a rarified brand that no one need raise the question of whether national defense can safely be left in his hands. Yet if there is today no issue like that once posed in the Nixon-Kennedy contest, the contrasting views of the two candidates provide a striking demonstration that ideas, including religious ideas, do indeed have consequences. This is not to say that religious differences have the specific practical consequences that one would expect, or that the differences between the two candidates are without their touches of irony: in foreign affairs, for example, Quaker Nixon took office with a pledge to end the war but he has in fact surpassed Lyndon Johnson in the amount of explosives dropped on Indochina, and fully one-third of all American casualties in Vietnam have occurred during the Nixon Administration. Similarly, on the domestic front the spirit of Puritanism, not to say Babbittry, is obviously alive and well in the Nixon breast, as witness his praise for the work ethic and his denunciations of what he calls the welfare ethic, and in this his adult posture reflects his early religious training; the irony, of course, rests in the fact that during President Nixon's three and one-half years in office six million additional people had to go on welfare.

In his article Mr. Henderson calls the Vietnam war "the single issue that most clearly illuminates the differences between the two candidates." Yet if James Reston of the *New York Times* is right, the Nixon strategy this time around is to concentrate the attention of the voters on foreign policy, where he sees himself as strong, and away from the domestic scene, where the Democrats might get mileage out of higher prices, unemployment, inflation and the like. The President is vulnerable on such domestic issues, clearly enough, but it is hard to see a logical basis for his notion of superiority on foreign policy, if the American people are not thoroughly bamboozled. Consider the chronology of the matter. Mr. Nixon won office with a pledge to end the war. What now seems plain, on the basis of testimony by Daniel Ellsberg and others, is that the Nixon plan to achieve peace had three separate planks, two of them far from peaceful: withdraw U.S. ground troops, pursue Viet-

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namization and escalate the U.S. war in the air. Throughout, Nixon's object remained the same as Johnson's: to win a military victory in what most people now see as an unwinnable war. In this design Vietnamization served a double object: it got U.S. ground troops out and propped up General Thieu, America's puppet, but it did not advance a negotiated settlement; quite the contrary. As Averell Harriman pointed out, Sargent Shriver was quite right in charging that Mr. Nixon blew an opportunity for a negotiated settlement as soon as he took office, when North Vietnam withdrew 90 percent of its troops from the northernmost part of South Vietnam, and this at a

time when the presence of 500,000 U.S. troops gave us far more bargaining power; if Mr. Nixon had been serious about a settlement, this would have been the time to bargain. How lacking the Administration is in genuine willingness to bargain, however, may be seen in the current Nixon peace proposal: an international cease-fire in place, with Thieu and the anti-Communist, pro-American government remaining in power—an offer that obviously is not going to be accepted.

In the foreign policy area the President wants to emphasize, then, the Nixon plan is to carry on an anti-Communist crusade in Vietnam, while at the same time,

'I Would Rather Talk About Hope . . .'

On September 5, Father Philip Berrigan, S.S.J., was sentenced at Federal District Court in Harrisburg to four concurrent two-year terms for smuggling letters out of Lewisburg Penitentiary. Following is the substance of a statement made by Father Berrigan at the sentencing.

. . . I am not here to spout brave noises, to issue a polemic against the government, to champion the defense or denigrate the prosecution, to glorify myself or any defendant, as above weakness or criticism. None of that. I would rather talk about hope at a time when many sensitive people see almost no hope. I would rather say something about our obligation to be hopeful, and to be hope to one another.

Hope is an elusive quality, having to do with promise and reality. Promise because people need to be sisters and brothers before they need to be selves; reality because a few always become those for others—the one small race, the one tiny family, the handful faithful to God and to people. These few become what we would all prefer to be; they offer lucidity and purpose and strength; they embody living evidence that everyone can become human, and that indeed, we can all make it and survive.

Even more surely, people die without hope. They contract and shrivel up and calcify inside, suffocating their spirits. One can see death in the faces of so many today—a hardening of feature, fear, even terror, cruelty, and a profound unhappiness. Recently, we spoke to a middle-aged prisoner one evening on the compound—one notorious for hedonism and brutality—now condemned to anonymity, contempt, a sterile old age. He failed to grunt, even, at our greeting, preoccupied as he was in his misery. Someone with me remarked pityingly, "He died when he was 12 years old."

When he won the Nobel Literature Prize in 1970,

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn prepared a lecture only recently slipped through Russian censorship and published in the West. In it, he wrote almost despairingly of violence sweeping the world like a plague. Not a plague, or might add, with a plague's ordinary sign and horror, but a plague immensely more lethal, with a thousand enticing faces, all as beguiling as Circe's; nation-state rivalries, imperial ambitions, corporate greed, ideological fixation, quick and easy profit, class and racial division, war, technological and political science.

How can one be aware of this threatening and violent torrent without despair? That is the question for millions of decent and sensitive people. The evidence would seem to indicate a universal conspiracy to ruin and to empty the planet—a conspiracy led by the superpower. The evidence would seem to indicate the triumph of nihilism, as we become more entrapped by a tyranny of ego and structure.

There is one revealing characteristic of violence that Solzhenitsyn refers to, calling it the spirit of Munich. Notice he does not apply the term to leaders allegedly preoccupied with appeasement as the price of peace. He does not speak of Chamberlain as the classic example, or as some would today, of George McGovern. Rather, he applies it to "those who have given themselves up to the thirst after prosperity at any price, to material well-being as the chief goal of earthly existence."

Solzhenitsyn's spirit of Munich is, I suppose, no more than a mild paraphrase of Christ's ominous words in Luke's gospel, "But how terrible for you who are rich now; you have had your easy life: how terrible for you who are full now; you will go hungry!" (Lk. 6, 24, 25)

One might inquire if there has ever been a time in our history when so many serious and dedicated Americans have gone into exile, or plan it? Who can dismiss outright their search for sanity, for community, for desperately needed change, and their failure to find it there? They have, for the most part, worked hard at responsibility—trying ideologies, leaders, parties, causes, organizations, protest. Yet little changes for the better—air and water

again ironically, encouraging grain sales to the U.S.S.R. and plane sales to Communist China. While the number of U.S. ground troops in Vietnam goes down, thankfully, the number of airmen in Thailand and Cambodia and on U.S. aircraft carriers goes up and up, with less and less discrimination being shown between military and civilian targets. It cannot be denied that the major change in Vietnam since Mr. Nixon's inauguration has been in the color of the dead, and the anonymous Air Force officer who predicted that the war might still be going on two or three years from now may well have been correct. All this in support of a corrupt, dictatorial regime, given to

torture and suppression at home but sufficiently "pro-American" in foreign policy. For our part, we are willing to give Mr. Nixon full credit for sincerity in his religious principles, as described by Mr. Henderson in his article and in his book, *The Nixon Theology*, but sincerity is not enough. Whatever the religious views of Mr. Nixon and those who carry out Administration policy, the fact remains that this country is engaged in a policy of mass extermination in Vietnam. Will the American people really endorse four more years of slaughter from the air by American forces there? It is painful to think so, and we hope the polls are wrong.

now more foul; slums expand and crumble; a country of stunning beauty becomes scarred and blighted. But the crushing burden for them is one of perpetual war, the cynical, incessant, senseless killing of people. On the one hand, they cannot endure it; on the other hand, they cannot stop it. As their perception grows, so does their revulsion. And their hearts fail. They become people of mourning, and misery, of hopelessness and escape.

However much one shares their anguish, one must search for better alternatives than silence, drop-out or exile. I have in mind a singular example of hope and courage.

On August 6, Hiroshima Day, 11 prisoners at Danbury began a fast against their countrymen to stimulate non-violent resistance to the Indochinese war. As it happened, another gallant community joined them by a similar fast in N.Y.C. I'll mention only the prisoners here, since obviously, I am more familiar with them.

The prisoners felt deeply that they must hope in themselves—prison did not discharge them of responsibility for the war. Secondly, they felt they must hope in their sisters and brothers; hope in their sense of justice and social generosity. In their case, I think, hope was both measured by sacrifice and sustained by it. . . . Several were draft resisters—apparently, they refused to rest on the act that first imprisoned them.

Since then, one has contracted heart complications; one has had a stomach hemorrhage. All have suffered grievously from hunger, weakness and loneliness. But they continue on, convinced that Americans will listen, all awaken to the agonies of a war-stricken people.

Some will judge them naive; others fanatic or masochistic. But I can attest that love for their countrymen, and for people in the war zone motivated them. The little they had as prisoners—visits from relatives, different food, hope of early release—all these they slowly gave up.

Apparently, some Americans understood. One lawyer inquired, when hearing of their effort, "What's wrong with us, that prisoners must show us how to resist this

war?" And the mother of one of the prisoners, a non-resister, said, "Not only did my son educate me, but it's clear he'll never go back to prison for the wrong reasons."

Basically, what did these people attempt to say to us with their Fast for Life? Very simply—that we have made a false peace if we are not doing our humane utmost to end this war; that we cannot claim reconciliation with God while having no reconciliation with the Indochinese; that affluent and overfed as we are, we are starving for God's nourishment—truth, justice, compassion, personal and social risk; that some demons, perhaps demons of delusion like indifference or cynicism, are exorcised only by prayer and fasting; that true hope is both a grasp of reality and a nonviolent plan to communicate it.

Those prisoners offered hope, I say, with a large and painful portion of their lives. Remember the Lord's gratitude for a revelation made to "merest children," and withheld from "the learned and the clever"? (Mt. 11, 25) Perhaps we need to relearn wisdom today from the poor, from the victims of raw power, from prisoners.

Two sayings of Christ, and one of Gandhi's, I have found sufficiently mysterious and challenging to be an antidote to bitterness and rancor. "For the man who wants to save his own life will lose it; but the man who loses his life for my sake will find it." (Mt. 16, 25) The second—"When you have done all that you have been told to do, say, 'We are ordinary servants; we have only done our duty.'" (Lk. 17, 10) And Gandhi's—"if we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. . . . One drowning man will never save another. Slaves ourselves, it would be a mere pretension to think of freeing others." Substitute America for India, if you will.

Perhaps the hope we embody, that is to say, the hope we offer others, is the same as effort to kill slavery in ourselves and in inhuman structures. To create hope is to wrestle with death. And since we all desire life, we must desire as well, a struggle with death. That struggle constitutes our hope.



The
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By Charles P. Henderson, Jr.

One Sunday morning this summer, while campaigning in Harlem, George McGovern visited the Community United Methodist Church, where he delivered a sermon and received the endorsement of the Reverend William M. James, for 22 years the pastor of this predominantly black, middle-aged congregation. Before McGovern rose to the pulpit, the congregation joined in singing selection 200 from the Methodist hymnal, "The Voice of God Is Calling . . .":

"The voice of God is calling
Its summons unto men;
As once he spake in Zion,
So now he speaks again:
Whom shall I send to succor
My people in their need?
Whom shall I send to loosen
The bonds of shame and greed?"

Whom shall I send? The Reverend James responded to that question in the most specific terms as he introduced the candidate from South Dakota: "We are proud to have Senator McGovern with us this morning. . . . History has brought him; the God of history has brought him to lead a crusade for the benefit of all mankind."

George McGovern opened his sermon with a scriptural reference according to the pattern that he had learned as the son of a fundamentalist preacher: "I am reminded of an Old Testament Scripture, a favorite of my father before me and of mine. 'The

Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' " McGovern then enumerated "the agenda of good news that the nation so desperately needs to hear." His agenda was simply a review of recent campaign proposals, including his promise to initiate sweeping economic and social reforms, and to end the war in southeast Asia.

This obscure campaign appearance illuminates an important element in McGovern's politics, and is an apt introduction to the present contest for the Presidency. Though the common Protestant affiliation of Richard Nixon (Quaker) and George McGovern (Methodist) guarantees that the religious issue will not be mentioned in the campaign, the political realities of the moment suggest that religion will play a decisive, subliminal role. Both McGovern's concern to increase his exposure among black Americans and other minorities, and the President's interest in the heavily Protestant areas of the South, West and Midwest, compel them to pursue their ties within the religious community. Moreover, as campaign strategists will surely point out, one of the most important swing constituencies in 1972 will be the emerging Catholic middle-class. It is precisely among this group that McGovern's hold over traditional Democratic voters is weakest, and Nixon's potential is strong. In this context the President's stand on the war, his promise to aid parochial education, his position on abortion and drug abuse, all seem to indicate that he may make impressive gains among Catholic voters.

CHARLES P. HENDERSON, JR., is Assistant Dean of the Chapel, Princeton University, and author of the newly published *The Nixon Theology* (Harper & Row).

More importantly, the mood of the nation at large necessitates an awareness of religious sensitivities. This factor is particularly important in Presidential politics. As Ray Price, a Nixon strategist and speechwriter, pointed out in 1968:

"Politics is much more emotional than it is rational, and this is particularly true of Presidential politics. People identify with a President in a way they do with no other public figure. Potential Presidents are measured against an ideal that's a combination of leading man, God, father, hero, pope, king, with maybe just a touch of the avenging Furies thrown in. They want him to be larger than life, a living legend, and yet quintessentially human; someone to be held up to their children as a model; someone to be cherished by themselves as a revered member of the family, in somewhat the same way in which peasant families pray to the icon in the corner. Reverence goes where power is; it's no coincidence that there's such persistent confusion between love and fear in the whole history of man's relationship to his gods. Awe enters into it."

The importance of this memorandum is not that it exposed a malevolent conspiracy on the part of Nixon's staff. The language may sound cynical to some ears, but the essential point must be recognized by any candidate for the Presidency. In order to be elected a man must capture the public trust. He must convince the electorate that he can fill the awesome responsibilities of the Presidency. Given the pervasive distrust of politicians, and of the political process itself, the task of simply winning the voters' confidence may be the chief prerequisite of victory. Success may hinge not so much on ideological factors, as upon the candidate's ability to evoke the root feelings and beliefs of the electorate. Likewise, traditional party loyalties will matter less than whether the candidate is sensitive to the longings of the heart. Though Nixon and McGovern may never explicitly mention religion, they will both seek to call forth those deep sentiments and symbols that are in large part a product of religion.

Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between a sincere attempt to win the public's confidence and the cynical manipulation of images and symbols for narrow partisan ends. In politics, the distinction between the cynic and the saint is so difficult to pin down that even the candidate may not clearly comprehend his own motives.

When McGovern stood at the Harlem pulpit and repeated his favorite lines from Scripture—"The Lord . . . has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."—how seriously, or perhaps one might better ask, how literally, did he take those words? Is George McGovern convinced that his candidacy represents the will of the God of history, or was his presence in

Harlem purely and simply expedient politics? "History has brought him; the God of history has brought him to lead a crusade. . . ."

During the ride back to McGovern's room at the Biltmore Hotel, and for more than an hour of private conversation, I pursued this question and a number of others that I hoped would illuminate the very complex relationships between McGovern's politics and his religion.

It was clear from the outset that McGovern did not take literally the proclamation that God had raised him up to the threshold of the Presidency. When I asked the Senator how he reacted to such a literal use of the divine name in his behalf, he replied with a broad smile: "You can't imagine a better endorsement." He spoke with a humor that combined enthusiasm for the minister's support with skepticism toward his theology. "I understand that that kind of endorsement is quite traditional in the black community."

Still it was McGovern who had wrapped his campaign promises in Scripture, and members of his own staff had arranged for the Harlem visit. Moreover, this candidate regularly uses Biblical references and religious language in his oratory. One senses in his most successful speeches a Biblical cadence:

I would like to call our country home from the
destruction in Asia;

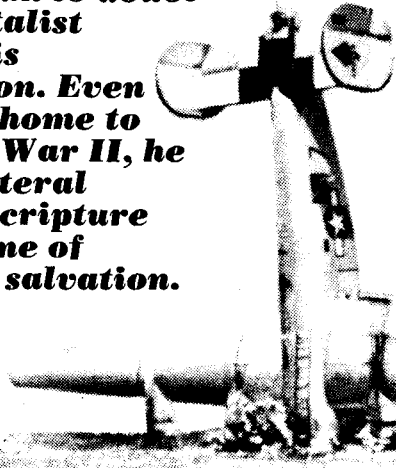
I would like to call this country home
to the Constitution;

I would like to call this country home from the
politics of image-making and deception to
the politics of hope and reconciliation.

I want to get on with the redemption of our
nation. . . . We must remember that admonition
of olden time: "I have set before you life or
death, blessing or cursing; therefore choose
life that thy seed may prevail."

One of McGovern's favorite words is redeem: "I want to get on with the redemption of our nation." "It is not enough to be a protester and a dissenter, or to 'turn off' and 'drop out.' One must also be an innovator, a reformer, and a redeemer." When McGovern uses this word—and others like it—he is conscious of the theological connotations. "Such words can be used in two ways," he told me, "either in a political or a religious sense. It is important to use words like that to enlist basic feelings and values for legitimate social purposes. I am conscious of borrowing religious phrases for political purposes." Still, I wondered, what is the difference between "borrowing" religious language, and exploiting that language as a conscious part of campaign strategy. Clearly a politician cannot be expected to ignore the church-going public. He must appeal to the deepest hopes and beliefs of the people. Yet one recoils at the suggestion

Despite the intense indoctrination, McGovern began to doubt the fundamentalist doctrines of his father's religion. Even before he left home to fight in World War II, he rejected the literal inerrancy of Scripture and the doctrine of instantaneous salvation.



that a Presidential candidate may use religion as a political weapon. The difference between a legitimate appeal to conscience and illegitimate posturing hinges in large part upon the background and beliefs of the candidate himself. Does he tie his policies to principles that are deeply rooted in his conscience, or does he appeal to the heartstrings only to take advantage of a particular mood or moment?

McGovern's tendency to preach has been noted by his admirers and critics alike. But in evaluating this trait, one may reach wildly different conclusions. Commenting upon his style as a campaigner, McGovern biographer Robert Anson writes: "If he [speaks] in an often moralistic, preachy way, it is only because he is the son of a minister and a former minister himself. That heritage is never far from him. It betrays itself most evidently in the manner of his campaign, in the almost Jesuitical scorn he reserves for those who challenge his word, in his habit of casting issues in moral terms. Philosophically as well as politically, he considers himself one of the elect. Such people are not easy to know or even to like. There is a righteousness in their demeanor that puts off more fallible men. So it is with McGovern, a man for whom respect comes easier than love." Though he is anxious about McGovern's righteousness, Anson renders a generally positive appraisal. By contrast, James Kilpatrick writing for the *National Review*, brands McGovern a "prairie preacher . . . He is the new minister in town, the one who wants the congregation to try a couple of different hymns."

To determine whether McGovern's preaching springs naturally from the man, we must explore his record in greater depth. Do the experiences and patterns of his life match the calculated image of the present campaign? At the most obvious level, the record and recollections of his childhood do seem to

justify at least an occasional reference to the Bible. "We were saturated with the Bible at our house," he told me. "My father believed that all wisdom could be found in the Bible. I remember as a child beginning each day with family prayer. My father would open our worship with a passage from the Bible; we gathered *every* morning, seven days a week, all down on our knees in prayer. And these experiences were not unpleasant. . . ."

McGovern also recalls attending Bible School during the summer and then going with his family to Camp Meeting. The revivalist preacher would set himself up in a tent outside the city limits of Mitchell, and the McGoverns would stay overnight in their own tent so they could participate in a full schedule of organized activity. McGovern emphasizes the continuing impact of this total immersion in the Scriptures: "Literally over a period of five or six years I must have committed hundreds of verses to memory. I absorbed much more of the Bible than I realized, and now these Bible passages sometimes come to me in the middle of extemporaneous speeches."

Despite the intense indoctrination, McGovern began to doubt many of the fundamentalist doctrines of his father's religion. Even before he left home to fight in World War II, he rejected the literal inerrancy of Scripture and the doctrine of instantaneous salvation. Yet his father apparently did not shelter him from "modernist" views, for he remembers listening to the radio sermons of the arch-liberal, Harry Emerson Fosdick. McGovern began to view the Bible as a work of great literature. "When I thought of it in that way," he told me, "then it began to become more meaningful."

The doubts of McGovern's adolescence were given further support in college at Dakota Wesleyan. There he encountered the works of Walter Rauschenbusch, a turn-of-the-century Baptist theologian who had become the leading exponent of the so-called "social gospel." Rauschenbusch taught that the chief responsibility of Christians was to apply the ethic of the New Testament to contemporary social problems and to advance the ideals of Jesus by working within the political system. He saw an affinity between socialist politics and the New Testament vision of the kingdom of God. As he wrote in *Christianity and the Social Crisis*: "The question then confronts Christian men singly and the Christian church collectively, whether they will favor and aid this trend toward communism, or oppose it." Despite his frequent use of the words "communist" and "socialist," Rauschenbusch stopped short of affiliation with the Socialist Party. His commitment was to the more general, and he believed, more enduring ideals of the New Testament. "There cannot really be any doubt," he wrote, "that the spirit of Christianity has more affinity for a social system

based on solidarity and human fraternity than for one based on selfishness and mutual antagonism." George McGovern vividly recalls his enthusiasm for this social gospel: "It was one of the most exciting ideas I ever read."

Since his college years, McGovern has continued to be "more interested in the social application of Christianity, rather than the salvation of personal souls." It may seem surprising that he so vividly remembers the writing of Walter Rauschenbusch. Yet the social gospel served an important part in McGovern's development. It provided the rationale for his evolution from the Biblical religion of his youth to the more focused idealism of his own political career. Beyond McGovern's specific memories of his early theological reading, there is a clear line of descent from *Christianity and the Social Crisis* to the Senator's current proposals for tax reform and redistribution of wealth. When one reviews the words that Rauschenbusch wrote in 1907, one can well imagine their appeal for the young man from South Dakota: "Wealth—to use a homely illustration—is to a nation what manure is to a farm. If the farmer spreads it evenly over the soil, it will enrich the whole. If he should leave it in heaps, the land would be impoverished and under the rich heaps the vegetation would be killed."

During his senior year at Dakota Wesleyan, McGovern decided to pursue his faith by undertaking study for the Christian ministry. He enrolled at Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, and he took a student pastorate at Diamond Lake, a resort and retirement community northwest of Chicago.

This trial year in the pulpit proved somewhat disappointing, however, and he found himself increasingly drawn to his first academic interest—the study of history. After a year of theological training, he transferred to the Graduate Department of History at Northwestern University. Here his Christianity was supplemented with the liberal politics prevalent on that university campus. In 1948, McGovern was drawn into the campaign of Henry Wallace, President Truman's Secretary of Commerce, who was running for the Presidency as a Progressive. McGovern was elected a delegate to the Progressive Party convention, and he traveled to Philadelphia with the Illinois delegation. But he became disillusioned with this third party insurgency when he saw at first hand the fanaticism of the party's more doctrinaire delegates. McGovern was exceedingly wary of a party which seemed so vulnerable to Communist infiltration.

Though this episode is still recounted as a demonstration of McGovern's allegedly radical politics, the more pervasive influence upon his thinking remained, I believe, the broad ideals of Biblical religion. McGovern biographer, Robert Anson, reports a telling conversation between McGovern and his closest friend

on the Northwestern faculty, historian Lefton Stavrianos. Stavrianos was the most radical professor at Northwestern, and the pair spent many hours together, discussing philosophy, politics, and history. "McGovern was a very idealistic person," reports Stavrianos, "his social consciousness was terrific." During one of their conversations, the historian asked McGovern suddenly: "George, what makes you tick?" To the professor's surprise, McGovern replied that it was his father's philosophy which still counted most. When the historian pressed him to describe what that philosophy was, McGovern replied with a quotation from St. Matthew: "Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Throughout his years at Northwestern McGovern attended church at the First United Methodist Church of Evanston. Here again he was exposed to liberal theology, as expounded by Ernest Fremont Tittle, one of the most renowned preachers of his era. Tittle was an avowed pacifist who decried U. S. involvement in World War II, even after the attack upon Pearl Harbor. He was also a leading member of the Methodist Federation of Social Service, the most extreme institutional expression of the social gospel.

The radical ethic of the New Testament, the theology of Walter Rauschenbusch, the preaching of Fosdick and E. F. Tittle, these influences were certainly more pervasive in McGovern's thought than the doctrines of Karl Marx or Lenin. The charges that McGovern is too radical to be elected President becomes much less credible when one considers that his most radical ideas come not from the Communist Manifesto, but from a home-grown variety of Methodist religion.

There is much recent evidence that McGovern is still concerned with the "social applications of Christianity," perhaps even to the exclusion of the personal elements of worship and prayer. During our interview, McGovern told me that he very seldom attends church and that he rarely prays, "at least in any conscious sense." Nevertheless, he has been active in the United Methodist Church at the national and international level. In 1968 he traveled to Uppsala, Sweden, as a delegate to the World Council of Churches, participating in the deliberations of the Section of Peace and International Justice. In 1969 he chaired the WCC's Council on Racism which met in Great Britain. As chairman, he wrote an introduction to the committee report. It reads, in part: "A central theme running throughout the deliberations and recommendations of the consultation is that if racism is to be eliminated, it will require more than the private commitment of individual Christians; indeed, the entire church must become committed to an action program on a broad social, economic and political front aimed at the erad-

ication of institutional racism in the society of man."

As these activities indicate, McGovern is well informed on current church teachings in social ethics. He regularly follows the liberal journals, *Christianity and Crisis*, *Commonweal* and the *Christian Century*. He has even addressed himself in writing to the problematic relationship between religion and the political process. In January, 1970, he wrote an article for *Theology Today*. Entitled "The Christian in Politics: The New American," it argues, "The Christian has much to contribute by mixing in politics. . . . At a time when our values and institutions are subject to convulsive questioning and ferment, the Christian has a special responsibility in refocusing our moral sensitivities. He must relate the Christian traditions of love, tolerance and purpose to the tensions and divisions of today."

McGovern's most serious attempt at a systematic definition of his social ethics was published this summer among a collection of essays entitled "Toward A Discipline of Social Ethics," edited by Paul Deats of the Boston University School of Theology. The Senator's essay bears the title "Political Participation—A Christian View." Here McGovern evidences broad knowledge of recent trends in theology as well as specific acquaintance with the major studies on church-state relations. His article is essentially an argument for the participation of Christians in the political process. As such, it is in a very real sense a summation of his theological evolution to date: "The tradition of concern and responsibility which calls Christians to work for a better world stretches back through the Social Gospel and St. Francis of Assisi to Jesus and the Hebrew prophets. . . . This essay is directed toward developing a Christian perspective on participation in the political processes of American society."

Today McGovern's closest contact in the hierarchy of his denomination is Bishop James K. Armstrong, who presides over the Methodist churches of North and South Dakota. Armstrong is also involved in various national committees of his church and travels frequently to Washington. Since 1963, when McGovern met Armstrong in Uppsala, the two have become close associates and friends. They confer almost weekly, discussing many issues of mutual concern. I asked the Bishop to describe the content of these conversations: "They involve," he said, "little theology in the abstract sense, but deal with ethical and social issues in a political context." Armstrong spoke with deep admiration for his friend. When I asked him whether he thought that McGovern saw his political involvement in specifically theological terms, he answered: "I don't think that the traditional doctrine of call or election would play a self-conscious part of his career. But he is a profoundly religious man. He has a profound and prophetic sense of indignation over

certain directions the nation has taken. This heightens his personal resolve as he approaches the Presidency and the responsibilities of that public office."

If we are to judge from the patterns of his biography, from his own writing, and the testimony of his associates, then, McGovern can claim a fair hearing when he speaks of moral imperatives and calls upon the conscience of the nation. Though he does not share Reverend James' belief that the God of history has raised him to power, McGovern does call upon those images, symbols and beliefs that are part of his own life-history and the history of this nation. Yet as he campaigns for the Presidency, McGovern must not only appeal in broad terms to the underlying ideals of the people, he must now frame the moral imperatives in more specific forms. He must persuade a majority of Americans that he should be elected President and that Richard Nixon should be defeated.

It is at this level—when the politician must apply his principles in a partisan bid for power—that the questions of conscience become most difficult. For President Nixon's religious credentials are similarly extensive. Nixon was also raised in a strict fundamentalist home, attended church and Sunday School throughout his childhood and still professes deep religious conviction. If McGovern represents a Methodist fundamentalism that was transformed by the social gospel, Nixon represents a Quaker idealism that was powerfully influenced by evangelical Christianity. As a teenager, Nixon attended a revival meeting in Los Angeles and there committed his life to a conservative gospel. He describes the experience as something of a conversion experience. Since that time Nixon has maintained his own contacts with evangelical Christianity, chiefly in the person of Billy Graham who has become something of a White House chaplain. The worship services which Nixon regularly holds in the White House, his continuing association with churchmen and church organizations, his own use of moral imperatives in his speeches, all indicate a self-conscious attempt to draw upon what he calls "the moral and spiritual sources" of this nation. Despite Nixon's difficulty in convincing the press, and much of the public, of his integrity, he is widely respected in many church circles. In 1970, he was elected Churchman of the Year.

Though Nixon and McGovern share a commitment to many of the basic ideals of the Protestant tradition, they differ sharply in applying their principles to specific policies. Here the contrasts reveal a great deal not only about the differences between the two men, but also about American culture at large. The Nixon-McGovern contest represents a confrontation between the major factions of the entire religious community.

The dimensions of the contest are well illustrated in

their attitudes toward work. It is a major tenet of the Protestant ethic that work is not simply a source of income, it is also a moral virtue and a sign of character. Throughout the debate on welfare reform, the President has insisted that a work requirement be included in any proposal for a minimum annual income. He has said, on a number of occasions, that his position on this proposal reflects the puritan ethic of his own Protestant training and that simple subsidies for the poor are not justifiable from a moral standpoint. As Nixon expressed it to British journalist Peregrine Worsthorne: "Both my mother and father were almost fierce in their adherence to what is now deprecatingly referred to as puritan ethics. Not only were they deeply religious, but they carried their principles over into their lives in other respects and particularly in an insistence that to 'accept help from the government' no matter how difficult our own circumstances were was simply wrong from a moral standpoint."

McGovern shares the President's conviction that work is a virtue, *per se*. Coming as he does from the farmlands of the Dakotas, McGovern is a true believer in the gospel of work. But he sees a flaw in Nixon's ethics. As he outlined his position to me: "If it's immoral for an individual to receive help from government, then why isn't it immoral for the government to assist Lockheed or ITT? The whole thing seems so hypocritical to me. The majority of people on welfare are unable to work." Where Nixon places the moral responsibility upon the individual to find a job, regardless of the circumstances, McGovern places the moral responsibility upon government to guarantee a living income to every citizen, regardless of merit. Yet curiously enough, McGovern also ties his own promise of full employment to the same puritan ethic that Nixon invokes. As he said during a press conference in 1971, his proposals for government-sponsored work projects are "really a kind of intelligent modern application of the puritan ethic. It's saying that we shouldn't waste labor, we shouldn't waste human life."

Here, as in many similar areas, the difference is chiefly in where the candidates place the primary *moral* burden. Nixon characteristically emphasizes the moral responsibility of the individual, stressing the moral duties incumbent upon every citizen: hard work, patriotism, respect for private property and the law. Nixon has been particularly outspoken in defending those laws that have been enacted to defend moral standards in the private sphere. He has opposed the liberalization of laws on abortion and on the sale of pornography, even to consenting adults. He has categorically dismissed the possibility of relaxing the prohibition against the private use of marijuana. He vetoed Congressional legislation for a system of federally funded day-care centers, arguing that this allegedly "communal" approach to child care represents

Where Nixon places the moral responsibility upon the individual to find a job, regardless of the circumstances, McGovern places the moral responsibility upon government to guarantee a living income to every citizen, regardless of merit.



a threat to the nuclear family—and thus to the chief support for traditional moral and religious principles. Likewise, his position on school busing emphasizes the responsibility of the individual in matters of race. He defends the right of the individual to attend school in his own neighborhood over against the right of society to enforce integration.

There is an unmistakable pattern in the President's ethics; he identifies his Protestant convictions almost exclusively with a rugged individualism that ignores the social causes of our ills. His conscience seems to dictate that all moral dilemmas can be resolved by a simple assertion of the safe and certain values of the mythical frontier.

McGovern, by contrast, is concerned chiefly about the public responsibility for larger social injustices. He sees our sins in a collective sense, and is prepared to offer a more comprehensive solution. Yet it is a gross misreading of his politics to suggest that he offers a radical alternative to prevailing moral standards—or to the standards of Richard Nixon, for that matter. Despite the fact that his campaign has attracted a few genuine radicals—Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, for example—McGovern is not, as one of his critics has put it, the 3 A's candidate, uncritically endorsing acid, amnesty, and abortion. His position on these issues is moderate. He has never condoned the use of hard drugs, or even marijuana. What he has done is to place the use of marijuana in a larger social context. He looks for the social forces that contribute to drug abuse, and he sees a direct relationship between the use of marijuana or LSD in youth culture, and the use of alcohol or barbiturates in suburbia. Likewise, he recommends leniency toward those who have opposed the war (as well as those who have committed crimes of war), arguing that the nation as

a whole should be held responsible for the injustice of Vietnam.

If Nixon mistakes Christian ethics for individualism, McGovern sometimes makes a similarly facile identification of his religion with certain social movements. One of his favorite books of 1970 was Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*. In a memo to his staff, McGovern praised Reich's description of Consciousness III: "What it all boils down to are the simple old values that my father and my Sunday school teachers taught me forty years ago. It's the best in the Judeo-Christian ethic out of which come the American Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, and I haven't found a new idea in the book. It's an exciting book, one of the most exciting that I have read. It's exciting to me because it is what I have believed in all my life. 'Consciousness III' tells us what the youth rebellion is all about. What the kids are saying to us is 'Why don't you live in the spirit of the New Testament and why don't you reaffirm the great ethical values of the Old Testament?'"

McGovern's ability to couch potentially explosive opinions in the language of old-time religion has its advantages, and also its liabilities. If he is successful in his attempt to evoke the root feelings and beliefs of the people on behalf of his own proposals, his campaign may be surprisingly effective, even among voters whom Nixon is now depending on for victory. Yet if the strategy becomes more apparent than the substance of his message, the public may read his convictions as self-righteous, and conclude that the much-touted McGovern sincerity is simply another example of campaign salesmanship.

In this regard, it may be a mixed blessing that Bishop Armstrong has formed a committee of religious leaders for McGovern. Armstrong's list includes many of the names most prominent in the liberal religious establishment: John C. Bennett and Brooke Mosley,

Nixon has argued that American involvement in Southeast Asia is unambiguous. Since we have no direct self-interest in the Asian subcontinent, this is the most selfless, the most moral war in our history.

William Sloane Coffin and Harvey Cox, Mary Luke Tobin and Abraham Heschel—leaders who are facing their own crisis of credibility. It should be an ominous signal to McGovern that this list, though shorter, is almost a duplicate of the one drawn up in support of Adlai Stevenson in 1956. If popular opinion polls have any relevance in this regard, it must be noted that no list of endorsements from the liberal community is likely to have the impact on McGovern's behalf that the single recommendation of Billy Graham will accomplish for Richard Nixon.

The paradox of the McGovern campaign may be that the more successful he is at delineating significant moral issues, and thereby attracting leading figures in the religious establishment, the more difficulty he may have in appealing to the broad constituency necessary for victory.

There is a further irony in the Nixon-McGovern contest. For Nixon, who sees the authority of religion as ruling primarily over the private sphere, nevertheless puts much greater emphasis upon the public role of the President as a religious figure. And McGovern, who emphasizes the social implications of his religion, is much more adamant that the President should not express his views on issues of religious dimension. For example, Nixon has expressed his conviction that abortion is an unacceptable form of population control because it represents a violation of "the sanctity of human life." During the debate on this issue in the New York State legislature, the President wrote to Cardinal Cooke, siding with the Catholic Church.

McGovern is convinced that such an expression of theological opinion is improper on the part of the President. He criticized Nixon's action as "loaded with political overtones." "It was a cynical, self-serving move," he told me. "The less Presidents talk about their own religious views the better." Likewise McGovern is skeptical of Nixon's White House services and of his frequent appearances with Billy Graham. If he were invited to attend a Billy Graham crusade, he said: "I probably wouldn't go. It is one thing to attend a regular worship service, to attend church on a Sunday morning as we did today in Harlem. But when you get out there at a rally with tens of thousands of people, and the television cameras, that's another matter. Any time the Presidential seal moves far out front in an act of worship, I get nervous."

Likewise, McGovern would not appoint a person on his staff as an advisor on religious affairs, as previous Presidents have done, and he would not attend the Presidential Prayer Breakfasts as President Nixon invariably has.

Perhaps the most telling difference between these two men is in the quality of their patriotism. For Nixon, patriotism is very closely related to piety. In

fact, he places devotion to country so high on his list of virtues that it seems to have moral, even theological significance. He seems to believe that this nation is the chief manifestation of God's will for mankind. As he said at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast in 1970: "America would not be what it is today, the greatest nation in the world, if this were not a nation which has made progress under God." Nixon so readily connects belief in God with the continuing progress and prosperity of the United States that one has difficulty imagining that he is sensitive to the terrifying injustices of this society. On one occasion, he did compare the country to Greece and Rome during the period of their decline, but he sees the nation's troubles as rooted in a failure of private morality: in permissiveness, in protest and criticism of the system, in lack of faith in the American way.

Nixon plays the priestly functions of a religious leader, forgiving the nation for its sins, restoring trust and sanctifying the major institutions of American society. As he said to the U. S. Chamber of Commerce in 1971, "Let's look at the facts. Here is the simple truth: there is no government agency and no philanthropy, no foundation, no voluntary organization that has done as much to help people as the private enterprise system. . . . What we need today is to take a lot more pride in the system that makes it possible for us to be the most generous and the most compassionate nation, not only to our own people, but to other people on the face of the world."

McGovern is certainly not lacking in patriotism. He can wave the flag and summon up his memories and medals from World War II without embarrassment. But he is sensitive to the tension between the priestly functions of religion and the prophetic. He seems to be acutely aware of the contradictions between the professed ideals of American society, and the realities of her political life. Hence he does not so readily pay tribute to the myth of American moral superiority. And this element in his thinking is most apparent in his attitude on the war, the single issue that most clearly illuminates the differences between the two candidates.

As both men are aware of the importance of moral issues in political debate, they both have poured their most intense moral energy into the debate over the war.

Nixon has argued that American involvement in southeast Asia is unambiguous: since we have no direct self-interest in the Asian sub-continent, this is the most selfless, the most moral war in our history. To that proposition McGovern reacts with righteous indignation: "You can use religion to cloak some dastardly things. It has been a disguise for some of the most murderous things done in history." Clearly McGovern has difficulty with the argument that Ameri-

ca's involvement in Asia is purely disinterested. He is wary of the proposition that the United States pursues a purely innocent course in world affairs. His sensitivity for the ambiguity of American policies makes it difficult for him to accept the idea that this nation is driven by a divine destiny or purpose. When I asked McGovern to comment upon the idea of manifest destiny, he replied unhaltingly: "God rules over all nations without any special favor to any." When I raised the point that many believe America's great wealth and power to be a sign of special blessing, McGovern shot back: "Maybe He intended the Indians to have all those things." But again McGovern softened his skepticism with humor; he was not speaking with the voice of a cynic. In fact, I came away from our conversation with the impression that McGovern's humor is closely related to his moral sensibility. In large part his appeal has been precisely his ability to combine criticism of American institutions and policies with affection for the nation and its people. He sees through the flaws in popular myths and can poke fun at the pretensions of power, but he succeeds at this precisely because he remains committed to fundamental American ideals.

But what if he were elected President? Faced by the awesome responsibilities of power and the necessity of becoming the advocate and chief defendant of his own Administration, could he sustain the saving combination of prophecy and patriotism? Or would this balance of opposing attributes collapse into a simple self-righteousness?

One of McGovern's favorite quotations is a line of Albert Camus from *Letters to a German Friend*. "You were satisfied to serve the power of your nation, but we dreamed of giving ours her truth." Perhaps McGovern's sense of humor and irony will prevent him from falling victim to the illusion that threatens anyone motivated by dreams of Truth: the illusion that any institution, program, or policy can claim the sanction of a moral absolute. In the final analysis the most the nation can ask of George McGovern is that he may live by his own warning, as he framed it in "Political Participation—A Christian View": "In Christian perspective, the most serious threat to ethical sensitivity in politics is self-righteousness and the blindness it induces. The true believer is always a greater threat in politics than either the cynical realist or the naive idealist. Hopefully, there is space in the middle for the responsible agent who seeks realistically and without delusions of purity to achieve a world more fit for human habitation. Such responsible agency requires breaking through the constraints of narrow self-interest to human goals, the willingness to seek and exercise power in areas of intense conflict, and a continuous realism about one's own motives and the limited possibilities of political action."

THE SCREEN

Director John Boorman likes stories in which men are pitted against each other at *Point Blank*, as his 1967 title put it. The film he did after that, *Hell in the Pacific*, was about a Japanese and an American soldier marooned on a Pacific island and fighting World War II all by themselves. Now Boorman has directed James Dickey's adaptation of his own novel, *Deliverance*, which resembles *Hell in the Pacific* in certain ways. In Dickey's novel four businessmen go on a canoe trip through the Georgia wilderness. But while it is the contest with nature that they are looking for, their real opponent turns out to be some backwoods crackers who attack them along the way. Their set-to with these local yokels turns the manly games they had wanted to play into a truly desperate struggle for survival.

The four businessmen are rather stock characters. As personalities, each would have his counterpart in any scenario where a group of people are suddenly and dangerously isolated from society—in Ford's *Stagecoach*, for instance, or in Hitchcock's *Lifeboat*. One man is a standard-bred liberal (Ronny Cox), while another (Ned Beatty) is the customary fat boy and cry baby of such dramas, a man along the lines of Piggy in *Lord of the Flies*. The leader is Lewis (Burt Reynolds), a self-styled man mountain who can't tell the difference between being gung-ho and being crazy. Lewis believes civilization will soon end. In fact, he "can't wait for it to happen," as his friend Ed (Jon Voight) points out to him. Ed is the judicious one in the group. He is the man who has something in common with each of the others but also sees beyond the values of each. When one of the hillbillies who attack the group is killed, the question arises whether they should take his body downstream with them or bury him and keep mum. Predictably the deciding vote on this issue falls to Ed.

Deliverance might seem a bit high-toned as a title for a mere adventure story like this, even if Dickey is a poet and his story better than routine. But I think there is some ironic self-appreciation in the title. A deliverance may be a delivery as well; and one could even say in this case that the literary delivery, which has exceptional descriptive clarity and precision, is the story's deliverance. Poets tend to respect conventions and forms, so it isn't surprising that a poet writing an adventure story should have mastered the anti-poetic naturalism which the genre demands—that he should have played it straight and done it well. Nor is it surprising that Dickey's achievement has not been very useful to Boorman. Dickey made liberal use of the opportunity any novelist has to expand a moment of action. A single action sequence in

the novel can take a whole chapter to tell. But on the screen it is almost impossible to stretch an intense action beyond its actual elapsed time without destroying its intensity. The exhaustive treatment Dickey gave to certain moments therefore had to be condensed in the film, and Boorman has wisely gone even further than necessary in places to simplify the action.

Beyond these technical differences, however, lies a fundamental difference between Boorman's conception of the story and Dickey's. If there is anyone in the novel who is modeled on Dickey himself, it is probably not Ed, the narrator-hero, but Lewis. (This harsh objectification of the author's own personality strikes me as the one eccentricity in Dickey's approach to novel-writing: it seems doubly curious because Lewis is often the flattest and most cliché characterization in the novel.) Like Lewis, Dickey was most interested in each man's struggle with himself—his struggle to make his body or mind perform despite deprivation, pain and fear. This internal contest, with Ed as the main fighting ground, is what is developed at such length in the book. But for Boorman the interesting struggle is again the external one of men against each other.

The result is a film that differs from the novel more significantly than is at first apparent. There are a few solitary scenes from the book that Boorman hasn't known how to handle. At a point where Ed must spend a whole night scaling a cliff, for instance, Boorman becomes too concerned that we might get bored. To keep us amused he solarizes the light coming from the backgrounds in each shot, thus giving the scene an eerie, incandescent quality. This is a poor equivalent for Dickey's descriptions of Ed's feelings at this point. But where Boorman has really surpassed Dickey is in providing the canoeing expedition with formidable enemies. In an early scene in the novel, before the canoeing expedition has even reached the river, one of the men happens into a guitar-banjo duet with a young hillbilly boy. Dickey simply describes the boy as a cockeyed albino and disposes of the scene in two pages. But Boorman builds it up, making it as long and important as any scene in the film and using it to establish the whole attitude of the local people toward outsiders.

Boorman also finds for the scene a boy whose physical strangeness isn't so easily identified as that of Dickey's boy. The boy in the film looks and moves like a decrepit man, and his eyes seem so vestigial a feature that we at first wonder whether he isn't blind. Moreover, unlike Dickey's boy, who is an affable dolt, the boy in the film remains ominously hostile to every overture made by the canoers except the music. This scene creates a mood that lasts throughout the film and adds a new level of tension to Dickey's story. It is this scene, as elsewhere in his rendering of the hillbillies, that Boorman takes over the story and makes it his own.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

BOOKS

The de-mythologizing of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**Letters and Papers
From Prison:
The Enlarged Edition**

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER
Edited by Eberhard Bethge
Macmillan, \$7.95

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer:
Theologian of Reality**

ANDRE DUMAS
Tr. by Robert McAfee Brown
Macmillan, \$7.95

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer:
Reality and Resistance**

LARRY L. RASMUSSEN
Abingdon, \$4.95

GEORGE A. LINDBECK

Bonhoeffer is the most widely hal-
lowed and haloed of recent theologians.
This is an odd status for the purported
prophet of non-religious, secular, death-
of-God and violently revolutionary in-
terpretations of Christianity; but radi-
cal theologies, like other movements,
need saints and Bonhoeffer seems tailor-
made for the role. He lived courage-
ously and died a martyr in the fight
against Hitler—one of the few causes
everyone agrees was good. Further, his
prison writings, especially in the earli-
er edition, have a gnomic, inspirational
quality which makes it possible, within
wide limits, to read into them whatever
one wishes and accounts for their be-
coming a modern classic among pro-
gressive Christians.

Demythologizing, however, proceeds
apace. All three of the present books
contribute to this process, each in its
own way, as do also many other recent
studies. The Bonhoeffer who is emerg-
ing remains an immensely attractive
person and perceptive theologian, but
also very much a creature of his time
and place and quite incapable, because
of the ambiguities and hesitations of his

still inchoate thought (he died at 39), to
provide firm guidance into the future.

We become aware as we read the new
material in the expanded edition of
Letters and Papers from Prison that he
was in some respects not at all a mod-
ern man. This is shown by the biogra-
phical data supplied by the extensive
excerpts from letters to Bonhoeffer as
well as from the more personal of his
own prison writings. His views on mar-
riage, to take one example, reek with
cozy, upper-class, Prussian and Luther-
an patriarchalism. The uncritical use of
Scripture to enjoin wifely submission
indicates that even his theological sen-
sibilities in this area were less contem-
porary than those of many Christians
who preceded him in time. Illustrations
of this point could be multiplied, but
let this suffice.

Dumas' book is easily the best over-
all analysis of Bonhoeffer's thought
which has yet appeared. It has been
well served by its translator, who is
a first-rate theologian in his own right.
Everything is here. All the theological
writings, spanning the years from 1927
to 1944, are examined developmentally
and systematically, placed in their bi-
ographical and intellectual setting, and
compared with other thinkers such as
Barth, Heidegger and Bultmann. Furth-
er, the interpretations of Bonhoeffer are
admirably surveyed and assessed with
a fine eye to local nuance even in refer-
ence to the American scene. It is, how-
ever, a book for professional theolo-
gians, and even some of these will be
baffled by sections which presuppose a
knowledge of the intricacies of Euro-
pean developments greater than that
possessed by many English-speaking
readers.

It also, not surprisingly, lacks sensi-
tivity to Anglo-American linguistic an-
alysis and sociology of knowledge.
From these points of view, Dumas'
study is handicapped by his failure to
distinguish properly between the mes-

sage Bonhoeffer proclaimed by his
"form of life" and "ordinary language"
affirmations on the one hand, and his
technical theological enterprise of sys-
tematically formulating theoretical war-
rants and backing for this message, on
the other. He therefore does not ask
insistently enough whether the message
might not have been better legitimated
by a different theology or, conversely,
whether Bonhoeffer's theological con-
cepts and theories might be more ap-
propriate to a different message. To be
sure, Dumas' study is so good that it
does not need to be redone in order
to provide help with these questions,
but simply transposed into a different
key.

Bonhoeffer's message is clear enough.
Christians must risk their lives and, if
need be, betray their country in order
to follow Jesus, the Man for Others.
One of his favorite verses was "Open
your mouth and speak for the dumb"
(Prov. 31:8). Both the church and in-
dividual Christians must do this espe-
cially on behalf of the Jews, who in his
situation were the dumbest of the dumb.
Bonhoeffer lived these affirmations
openly and ecclesially as a leader of
the Confessing Church during the
1930's and then, when the government
made this impossible, clandestinely and
secularly as a counter-espionage agent
pretending to work for his country's
victory but actually conspiring with
others for Hitler's assassination and
Nazi Germany's defeat.

His theology was an attempt to pro-
vide a justification for this message in
terms of his German and Lutheran in-
tellectual heritage. As his mode of pro-
clamation changed from the public and
churchly to the secretive and worldly,
he formulated such new technical con-
cepts as "the religionless interpretation
of Christianity" and "man-come-of-age"
to help in the task of theoretical legiti-
mation, but these ideas only involved
modifications, not abandonment of his

previous theology. It is not at all clear that they were suitable for his purposes and, in any case, once detached from his particular message and theology, they are peculiarly susceptible to use as justifications for a whole range of affirmations which he would have anathematized.

Something like this, it seems to me, is the import of Dumas' work when it is translated into a certain Anglo-American conceptual idiom.

Rasmussen, as an American, is to some extent familiar with this idiom, but his book, in comparison to Dumas', is lightweight and poorly composed. Nevertheless, it in general supports the evaluation of Bonhoeffer which we have just sketched, and the last chapter in particular, which gives a "moral profile" of the conspiracy, is a fascinating and important contribution to the literature on the German Resistance.

This profile suggests that perhaps it was actually the later "non-religious" Bonhoeffer who was actually the unworldly one. He did not see (as we can with the benefit of hindsight) that the elitist Prussian overtones of the resisters' religionless humanism distorted reality even more than did the religion

of the temporizing churchmen with whom he had been working. The conspiracy was in a way morally admirable, but it was also a tragi-comic restorationist farce. That is in large part why it failed in its assassination attempt, and the failure might have been worse had it succeeded. Even in worldly humanistic terms, the Confessing Church, with all its inhibiting religiosity, probably did much more for mankind during the Third Reich and after. Further, its weakness was not the result of too much religion, but of the wrong kind. It had a Lutheran sacral horror of tyrannicide, but not of tyranny.

This does not mean that Bonhoeffer was wrong in believing that he was following Christ's command by turning conspirator when he could no longer work within the church, but it does suggest that he was theologically romantic in sometimes speaking as if this religionless role was somehow more obedient, more Christian, than his previous one. Secularity no less than religion can blind the eye to moral and practical realities, and it is an illusion to suppose that Christians will automatically be more faithful if they "let the world set the agenda" (to cite a currently popular theme).

Most of what Bonhoeffer meant by the religionless interpretation of Christianity is not, however, impugned by this criticism. Much of it has become commonplace under other names even in circles uninfluenced by his theology. Rahner or even more Metz, for example, agree, first, that Christianity is fundamentally this-worldly rather than other-worldly, second, that it is concerned with the public and communal spheres rather than primarily with the private or existential ones and, thirdly, that it is powerfully present in "unconscious" forms (the term is Bonhoeffer's) among many who are not explicit Christians. They agree, fourthly, that the church's witness to its Lord is to be measured entirely by its faithfulness, not by conversions, and they share many of Bonhoeffer's objections to a "stop-gap God"—i.e., one who is rec-

ommended on the grounds that he makes life and the world more intelligible, meaningful, bearable or good. Yet, fifthly, this implies for them and him no diminution in the importance of worship, sacraments, prayer and bible-reading. Thus, sixthly, they are together devoted to a church which is explicitly Christian in highly visible ways, although they are also committed to its becoming a purified, and probably much smaller, suffering servant of mankind's this-worldly needs rather than a triumphalistic and ecclesiocentric institution of other-worldly salvation.

The last two points in particular are usually, naturally and perhaps inevitably excluded by what "religionless Christianity" or "Christian secularism" have come to mean in the time since Bonhoeffer. That is why such concepts are of doubtful usefulness in developing that vision of the future towards which he was groping in his final days.

Myths to Live By

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

Viking Press, \$6.95

J. A. APPLEYARD

What do the 86,400 seconds in a day have to do with the 540 doors in the Valhalla of the Icelandic sagas? What does R. D. Laing's account of schizophrenia have to do with the wanderings of Odysseus and the visionary experiences of an Eskimo shaman interviewed in the 1920's by the explorer Rasmussen? Joseph Campbell knows, and you will too if you spend a few hours with these lectures which he gave between 1958 and 1971 at The Cooper Union. You would be well advised to, because few scholars know as much about myths as Campbell (who has worked for years on a four-volume



REVIEWERS

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FATHER J. A. APPLEYARD, S.J., is the author of *Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature* (Harvard University Press).

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study of world mythologies called *The Masks of God*, and is generally well known for *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*), and even fewer are willing to speculate in so interesting a fashion as he does.

It will come as no surprise to you that we live in an age afflicted with the breakdown of systems of belief. Campbell calls our malaise "pathology of the symbol," and he compares it to the overwhelming dislocation experienced by the plains Indians when the white man slaughtered all the buffalo and deprived them both of a symbol and of a whole way of life which that symbol had served. For Campbell reflection on the origin and function of myths may offer a way out of our predicament.

The first evidences of mythological thinking occurred in the period of Neanderthal Man, in the form of ceremonial burials and totem caves. Campbell thinks that the desire to transcend mortality was at the root of the myth-making impulse, along with the awareness that the society one grows up in has a permanence and an authority greater than one's self, and that one lives therefore by participating in its rites and symbols. A further motive for mythologizing was the need to be identified with the natural world, to find systems of order which one's own existence could be brought into relation with (one of the most powerful of these was the cosmic order which the Sumerian astronomers discovered and made the organizing image of their city-states). Myths placed the individual in relation to a unified and coherent world order, religious, moral and social as well as cosmic. They were that order.

For a variety of reasons these myths have been losing their force. Some were organized around outdated accounts of the cosmos. Then, too, increased knowledge and technological capacity lessened the domain we needed to ascribe to the mysterious. Most recently epistemology and psychology have focused our attention on the individual rather than on the systems and structures he is part of. The result is what Campbell calls "the Wasteland

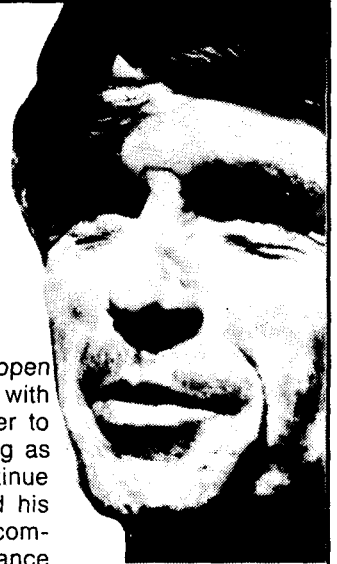
situation": we feel cut off from the world around us, it does not talk to us nor we to it, we look for gurus and occult messages, we ask ourselves who we are.

But Campbell's thesis is not another version of The-Divide-of-the-West. His scenario is fundamentally optimistic. Instead of Spengler, Yeats, Pound and other savorers of contemporary *Götterdämmerung*, he cites the cultural historian Leo Frobenius, who envisioned a three-stage progress of mankind: first,

a primitive society of non-literate hunters and planters living in immediate relationship to their surroundings; then, the complex literate urban "monumental" cultures, from Mesopotamia and Egypt to modern Europe and America (pre-eminently the era of mythmaking); and finally, the new global age just now beginning when we internalize and recognize in ourselves the powers which we formerly attributed to gods and to cosmic entities.

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Audrey Schirmer

DANIEL BERRIGAN AMERICA IS HARD TO FIND

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This is the hope that Campbell offers. The center of mystery is now man himself. Our myths were originally projections of our psyches when they were bounded by horizons we could not see beyond. But now there are (it is the title of his concluding chapter) "no more horizons." The symbolic forms in which our wisdom-lore was embodied are now seen to refer, not to supposed or even historical personages or events, but to "the inward poten-

tials of our own species," to us as centers of Mind at Large (the phrase is Huxley's). "It is simply a fact . . . that the images of mythology that in childhood are interpreted as references to external supernaturals, actually are symbols of the structuring powers (or, as Jung called them, archetypes) of the unconscious." And these powers represent the natural forces which are "the soul of the universe."

Well . . . yes . . . Campbell's argument is provocative, but somehow one does not want to follow him all the way through his final chapter. Perhaps it is because one has agreed too well with him when he said earlier that the first function of myth is "to waken and maintain in the individual a sense of awe and gratitude in relation to the mystery dimension of the universe." It is difficult to think of this mystery as completely immanent in ourselves. Perhaps it is because his argument rests a bit too much on a "we-know-better" attitude towards the limitations of the generations which have gone before us. The impulse to self-transcendence still seems operative.

As a collection of lectures, the book is inevitably uneven. The chapters on oriental art, Zen, and the mythologies of love, war and peace, contain numerous delights but in the main are heavy going. The best part of the book is a chapter on schizophrenia as a journey into the self. Campbell brilliantly matches Laing's account of the stages of a schizophrenic episode (break from the local context; deep retreat backward in time and inward into the psyche; a chaotic series of dark and terrifying encounters there; finally, in the fortunate, through encounters which are centering and harmonizing, a journey of rebirth to life) with the stages of the mythological hero-journey, of which the pre-eminent instance in Western literature is Odysseus. And he connects both of these with the contemporary psychic drop-out who attempts via drugs to make the same inner journey ("trip") towards identity. The parallels are surprising and instructive, both about psychic crisis and about the literary versions of the quest-journey motif.

Campbell's method of juxtaposing disparate chunks of data and then disclosing their underlying unities works superbly here, and this chapter almost succeeds by itself in validating his thesis that the only way we can any longer "live by" myths is to redefine their meaning in terms of our own spiritual capacities.

The Valhalla? Well, at the end of the world 800 warriors will go through each of its 540 doors to join combat with the anti-gods. Multiply those numbers and you get 432,000. In Indian mythology the number of years of an aeon is 4,320,000,000. This is called a Day of Brahma, and will be followed by a Night of Brahma of equal length. Which makes the total of years of an entire cosmic round 8,640,000,000. Which is. . . But, then, if you enjoy these kinds of correspondences, you don't need convincing; you're already on Campbell's side. If you don't, read and (perhaps) be convinced.

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 515)

the inadequacy of the article as a piece of historical description is the author's seeming enthusiasm for the "American theology" he describes. More than thirty years ago, H. Richard Niebuhr satirized the naiveté of such theology: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." Yet today, when Mr. Nixon and his cohorts are bombing Vietnam into the Stone Age and when many of our cities seem already there, we are cheerfully reminded that "Americans have believed themselves . . . summoned to lead the way to millennial fulfillment." The article could, I suppose, be read as a subtly ironic contrast between American myth and reality, but I fear that the real and tragic irony is that the author and so many others can take seriously such self-serving and self-deceiving clichés. Is not the continued propagation of such

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"theology," whether in Christian or secular form, the ideological blinder which prevents us from understanding ourselves and thus maintains the facade behind which the arrogance of power operates.

I do not wish to suggest another straw man ("the evil Americans") and I do agree with Brother McGowan that as Christians we cannot be pessimists about God's creation and that the doctrine of creation must be central to Christian theological renewal today. I would simply suggest that the theology we require must be at once more theologically thoughtful and politically realistic.

JOHN F. KANE

Reply

Bronx, N.Y.

In many ways John Kane's letter reflects the kind of thinking to which I was trying to offer an alternative in my article on the American theology. There is demanded a plurality of theologies to even tentatively approach an understanding of the revelation of God in Christ. What I was arguing is that "American" theology has somehow preserved a strain of Christian thought which is found in the Fathers and in the Eastern church but which was largely lost when Western theology turned to sin instead of creation as its primary theological category.

Mr. Kane fears that the American theology will serve as an "ideological blinder" to prevent us from understanding ourselves. I sense, however, that by "understanding ourselves" he means that we will recognize some kind of innate sinfulness and helplessness. Personally, I prefer to see man as a creature who is continuously being called to discover the divinity which is indeed within him as gift.

The argument that the American theology can be used to validate Mr. Nixon's war surely has missed the point of my putting men like Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Berrigan brothers at the center of the essentially prophetic dimension of this Christian tradition. Of course there is always a danger in

applying the theme of "election" to a people—and certainly Americans have in the past misused their call by religiously authenticating some national and international atrocities. But the term "chosen" need not mean the best; in fact, it really means the weakest, the servants. The role of the American prophet is to be intolerant of such evils as bombed-out Vietnamese villages or dehumanized American ghettos. He calls America to be the repentant servant to the world, to be the source of creative reconciliation rather than debilitating polarization.

THOMAS MCGOWAN

Ed. Note: A serious typographical error occurred on page 356 of Thomas McGowan's article, one which omitted the word man from the sentence: God is placated but man remains corrupt. We regret the error.

Charismatics

Cincinnati, Ohio

To the Editors: The charismatics and

McDonnell to the contrary notwithstanding [May 5], I do not think we humans experience divinity directly but only obliquely, indirectly, that is, in the experience of something else. We can, by faith, recognize the Lord in the breaking of the bread, in giving drink to the thirsty, in clothing the naked. I do not deny that the Pentecostals feel something. Obviously they do. They think they feel God but do they really? People who think God is saying things to them usually end up with problems or causing other people problems, especially those in authority. It makes more sense to me to suppose that God does not communicate directly with any of us.

KIERAN QUINN

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